DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 250 644 CG 017 846

AUTHOR Catlin, George; Halgin, Richard P.
TITLE Laboratory Exercises for an Undergraduate Personality Course.
PUB DATE Aug 84
NOTE 10p.; Paper presented at the Annual Convention of the American Psychological Association (92nd, Toronto, Ontario, Canada, August 24-28, 1984). Best copy available; print is light and blurred.
PUB TYPE Guides - Classroom Use - Guides (For Teachers) (052) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS College Curriculum; *Experiential Learning; Higher Education; *Personality Traits; *Psychology; Undergraduate Students; *Undergraduate Study

ABSTRACT

This series of exercises is designed to provide undergraduate students with some experiences to deepen and clarify their understanding of the various approaches to personality. The exercises include the semantic differential, modeling, systematic desensitization, shaping, role construct repertory, free association, and approach-avoidance conflicts. The exercises assume the students will have a general understanding of the theories involved. All of the exercises can be run with a great many students or with only a few. Thus, with sufficient organization, they could be administered to a large lecture class as well as to a small laboratory section. In some cases, arrangements for a room with a capacity larger than the class size would be beneficial. In all cases, a competent teaching assistant should be able to direct the exercises. (Author/BL)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED250644

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Laboratory Exercises for an Undergraduate Personality Course

George Catlin and Richard P. Halgin

Department of Psychology

University of Massachusetts

Amherst, MA 01003

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

X This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official NIE position or policy.

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

George Catlin

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

CG 017846

This series of exercises was designed in response to the expressed need of undergraduate students for some experience which would serve to deepen and clarify their understanding of the various appraoches to personality. It is assumed that students participating in the exercises will have a general understanding of the theories involved. By tying that understanding to an experience, the approach to personality comes into a distinctive focus.

All of the exercises can be run with a great many students or only a few. Thus, with sufficient organization, they could be administered to a large lecture class as well as a small laboratory section. In some cases, arrangements for a room with a capacity larger than the class size would be beneficial. In all cases, a competent teaching assistant should be able to direct the exercise.

SEMANTIC DIFFERENTIAL

1. Elicit from the class ten constructs or polar scales descriptive of fundamental personality attributes: strong-weak, happy-sad, wise-foolish, etc. Constructs from the Role Construct Repertory Test or entirely new ones may be used.

2. Have all members of the class write the constructs down on a clean sheet of paper: one construct per line, one pole at the left hand margin, and one at the right, and the numbers 1 to 7 evenly spaced beneath each pair.

Good Bad
1 2 3 4 5 6 7

They should then copy the same scales onto another sheet of paper.

3. Have the students rate themselves on all ten scales on one of the sheets of paper.

4. Have them rate their "ideal self" on the other sheet.

5. In analyzing their ratings, suggest that students first look for any logical inconsistancies within their view of themself. Positive ratings on "wise-foolish", "strong-weak", and other similar constructs but a negative rating on "good-bad" might be such an inconsistancy. Differences between the self and ideal self should then be noted. A gap of three or more positons on the seven point scale might arbitarilly be seen as significant.

6. Conclude with some mention of the recognized limitations of the difference between self and ideal self as a measure of adjustment.

MODELING *

1. Introduce this exercise as one providing both a demonstration of experimental design and an experience of learning through modeling.

2. Explain the design of the experiment.
   1) All subjects (the class) will be tested on a specific ability.
   2) All subjects will then rate their own self efficacy.
   3) One third of the class will then receive treatment based on participation modeling, one third will receive treatment based on vicarious experience, and one third (or less) will receive no treatment.
   4) self efficacy ratings for all subjects
   5) a posttest of ability
   6) a final self efficacy rating

3. A suggested specific task to be learned is holding a pencil in the writing position, tossing it in the air so that it does a "half flip", and catching it again in the writing position but this time with the eraser end down. Introduce the task bu demonstrating it once prior to the pretest. For the pretest have all subjects attempt the manuver ten times and record the number of successful attempts.

4. Have subjects rate their self efficacy expectation as a percent.

5. Randomly divide the class into thirds. Give the vicarious modeling group a three minute demonstration of the skill. (If pencil tossing is being used, a relatively slow arm motion and a high toss is recommended rather than a quick flick of the fingers.) Simultaneously, if possible, have the technique demonstrated to the participation modeling group and then allow them to practice. Instruct the controle group not to watch either of the other groups.

6. Have all subjects rate self efficacy.

7. Run a posttest of ability: ten tosses.

8. Have all subjects rate self efficacy a final time.

9. Compute and graph mean self efficacy ratings, and pretest and posttest scores for all groups on one large graph.

* This exercise is adapted from an experiment run by Bandura et al. in 1977.

SYSTEMATIC DESENSITIZATION

1. Have the class identify one area generally agreed upon to be anxiety producing. Test taking and public speaking would be possible subjects.

2. Identify a "most freightening" experience in the chosen area and four or five successively less anxiety producing scenes. A possible list might be:
   1) addressing a large audience on an unfamiliar subject
   2) addressing a small group on a familiar subject
   3) approaching the podium to give a lecture
   4) driving to the place where you are going to speak
   5) eating breakfast the morning of a scheduled lecture

3. Introduce a simple relaxation technique: Close your eyes, imagine yourself lying on a beach, feel the warm sun relaxing you muscles, and each time you exhale feel the tension go out of your face (arms, legs, or body).

4. Have the students practice the technique for a few minutes remembering to stay alert (not fall asleep) as they relax.

5. Instruct the students to visualize the least anxiety producing scene in the list, experiencing it as fully as possible.

6. While holding the imagined scene, have the students begin the relaxation technique. Encourage tehm to fully relax while imagining the least anxiety producing scene.

7. If time allows, repeat steps five and six with the next scene in the list.

8. Discuss the experience.

SHAPING

1. Explain the format of the exercise:
   1) A volunteer subject will be selected.
   2) With the volunteer out of the room, the class will choose a behavior which they will "teach" the subject.
   3) The subject will come before the class and behave naturally.
   4) The class will reward successive approximations of the chosen behavior with applause trying to get the subject to perform the behavior.

2. Ask for a volunteer subject.

3. Run the procedure outlined in step one. An unusual behavior such as a somersault will provide the maximum experience of shaping.

4. Interrupt or end the process at any time to either ask the subject for feedback or have the class discuss the criteria for reward.

5. Repeat the process as time allows.

6. Encourage discussion of how the same process works more subtlely in daily life.

ROLE CONSTRUCT REPERTORY TEST

1. Give the students, or have them generate, a list of eight to ten roles to which every student would probably be able to assign a specific person. Mother, father, liked teacher, disliked teacher, ex-flame, successful person, unhappy person, admired person, etc. are examples of appropriate role titles.

2. Have the students individually assign names to each title while you write the role titles on slips of paper to be selected from a "hat".

3. Data sheets will be necessary for the next step. If they have not been previously xeroxed, have the students write the following column headings across the top of a sheet of paper:

Similar Figures	Similarity Construct	Dissimilar Figure	Contrasting Construct

4. Randomly choose three role titles from the "hat". Have the students indicate on their data sheets the way in which two of those people are alike (similarity construct) and different from the third (contrasting construct). They should also list the role titles in the appropriate spaces.

5. Repeat Step four 15 times. Students may use any construct, or one very similar to it, as often as they choose.

6. Have the students list the constructs they generated, grouping those that are similar to one another.

7. Discuss George Kelly's view that these constructs represent the way inwhich we interpret the past and predict the future. An individual with few or only one construct (good-bad) would have great difficulty in predicting behavior and recognizing differences between people.

FREE ASSOCIATION

1. Instruct the class to group themselves into pairs and to spread out in the room as much as possible.

2. Explain that each student in turn will be given a word to serve as the starting point for a series of free associations. Point out that the idea is not to list words that are all associated directly with the original word, but rather to allow each new word to be the starting point for an entirely new association. Example: if "red" were the original word, words such as "fire engine, stop light, autum leaves, etc," would be inappropriate. The list "fire engine, siren, ambulance, hospital, sick" would be an example of free association.

3. Have the students sit facing one another. The student not associating should keep track of the number of associations and write down whatever word the first student ends with. Remind the students there is no "right" and "wrong". Ask for a word from the class to begin with, or supply one of your own. Once the first set of students are done, have them switch roles and repeat the exercise.

4. Now repeat the previous exercise, but this time have the students associating make themselves as comfortable as possible and close their eyes. The second student should look elsewhere listening unobtrusively.

5. Elicit general discussion of the experience.

6. Collect the final words of all the sessions and compare the results of the two modes.

7. In conclusion, mention of Carl Jung's preference for symbolic interpretation of dream material could be made. Jung felt that many images in dreams have specific symbolic meaning. Thus, the color red would symbolize fire-danger-spirit, a concept much larger than the color itself. Free association, in Jung's view, tended to lead one away from rather than into the full meaning of dreams.

APPROACH-AVOIDANCE CONFLICTS

1. Introduce this exercise as one involving a degree of emotional involvement in a hypothetical situation. As such, students should make an effort to play their roles seriously, take note of their internal state, and yet not lose perspective on the hypothetical nature or the exercise.

2. Present the class with an object which would probably be desireable to most students. A free trip to Florida or an automatic "A" in the course might be an appropriate choice. If it can be presented as a material object, such as an envelope supposedly containing airline tickets and expense money, it will facilitate the focussing of desire for it.

3. After "talking up" the merits of the object, have the students write down their attitude toward it. They could rate their desire for it on a scale from one (would not like it at all) to ten (would like it very much) with five representing a neutral attitude toward it.

4. Present a mild reason to avoid the desired object which in no way lessens the value of the object itself. In the case of the trip to Florida, a loss of two points on their final grade for the course would suffice.

5. Again have the students record and rate their attitude toward the trip.

6. Repeat steps four and five a number of times presenting increasingly strong avoidance motivation (a loss of ten points, 20 points,... expulsion from the college). Have the students pay particular attention to the point at which motivation to avoid the trip equals motivation to take it.

7. Discuss the experience. The theme should emerge that the trip itself actually becomes no less attractive. However the desire for the trip comes increasingly into conflict with another separate drive - the desire to do well in school. When such a conflict exists between more basic drives, it is seen to provide the basis for neurotic behavior.